

Responding in Challenging Times:

Minister's East Kilbride News Message No 4

I wonder how good you are with technology. One of the things which will change forever when we come out of this difficult period, is the way we will use technology in the future. I have been in contact with many people who are currently working from home, and are managing quite well. Surely we will all learn that there is no longer a need for people to commute every single day to an office, clogging up our roads, using up the earth's precious resources, when at least some of the time we could all work from home.

As a minister, I have always worked from home in that I live in a manse and I have an office in that manse. I am quite used to having no commute, I simply have to take myself out of my bedroom, come down the stairs to my study, switch on my computer and I'm ready to go. From there I can prepare materials for worship services, and other things I am responsible for. However, I always structure my day around some face to face interaction with others, whether that be visiting people in difficult situations, or simply a trip to the supermarket.

For us in the church, this has been a strange time, as much of our work revolves around face to face interaction. Church is about people meeting together, whether that is at a church service or at a church organisation. Therefore we have had to "think out of the box" in terms of how we continue to be the church. I have had to quickly embrace technology and fortunately have a good team behind me who can now put services out on both our website, our Facebook page and on YouTube. It's been a steep learning curve, but now that we've ventured into that territory, I know there is no going back. When this period is over, we will simply have to learn from it, and do things differently.

The same is true for our social interaction with friends and family. Before this period began, I had never heard of Zoom, yet now, I, and my family, speak regularly to my 87 year old mother who lives in a nursing home in Dumbarton. Until recently, my sister and I would both visit around once a week, travelling for an hour each way. Now we can speak far more regularly and I know that when this period is over, we will still visit in person, but we will make much more use of video visits. I'm sure that will be true for many of us.

Easter was strange this year as we obviously couldn't worship together in church, but the whole day my phone was constantly bringing me Easter greetings from friends and family, one of the first being from my colleague Fr Rafal in St Bride's. I hope and pray that when this period is over, as it will be some day, that even while we hug our loved ones, we still keep alive our virtual connections.